

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7573

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 06685

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, PO

SUBJECT: THE FRENCH SOCIALISTS AND THE PORTUGUESE
EXPERIENCE -- FEAR IS THE KEY

SUMMARY: THE FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) IS MAINTAINING
-- ALONG WITH MOST OF ITS EUROPEAN COUNTERPARTS -- A
VERY LOW PROFILE STANCE ON EVENTS IN PORTUGAL. THE
FEAR OF BEING PERCEIVED AS PLEADING THE CAUSE OF
REACTION OR, ALTERNATIVELY, AS CALLING SPECIAL ATTENTION
TO THE PLIGHT OF MARIO SOARES AND THE PORTUGUESE
SOCIALISTS APPEARS TO BE THE ROOT OF THE PS DIFFIDENCE.
END SUMMARY.

1. CRITICISM FROM THE RIGHT: DURING THE PAST TWO
MONTHS THE CONSERVATIVE AND MODERATE FRENCH PRESS HAS
BEEN CHIDING THE PS FOR ITS RELATIVE "COMPLAISANCE IN
FAR LEFT DOMINATION" OF THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION.

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RESPECTED COMMENTATORS SUCH AS RAYMOND ARON AND JEAN

D'ORMESSON (LE FIGARO) HAVE SUGGESTED THAT PS FIRST SECRETARY FRANCOIS MITTERRAND HAS SHOWN LACK OF COURAGE IN REFUSING TO CRITICIZE THE EXCESSES OF THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS. THE SAME COMMENTATORS HAVE STRESSED THE MODERATING INFLUENCE WHICH WILLY BRANDT'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ARE ALLEGED TO HAVE HAD THROUGH THEIR REPEATED CALLS FOR MEANINGFUL COALITION GOVERNMENT IN PORTUGAL.

2. PS FEARS: WHILE MAKING NO BONES ABOUT THEIR FEARS FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN PORTUGAL, MITTERRAND AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS FEAR THAT ANY DENUNCIATION OF PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP) TACTICS WILL BE TAKEN BY THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) AS A DEFENSE OF COUNTER REVOLUTION AND THE PORTUGUESE BOURGEOISIE. EVEN THE PS LEFT-WING HAS COME TO FEAR THE STRENGTH OF WHAT IT CONSIDERS TO BE THE MOST "STALINIST" COMMUNIST PARTY IN EUROPE. OUTGOING PS NATIONAL SECRETARY FOR THIRD WORLD AFFAIRS DIDIER MOTCHANE, HIMSELF A LEADER OF THE PS LEFT-WING CERES GROUP, RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT "WE HAVE WITHDRAWN ALL OF OUR AID TO THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO CONCENTRATE OUR RESOURCES ON AIDING THE ANTI-STALINIST BATTLE OF MARIO SOARES."

3. A SECOND PS FEAR IS LESS FREQUENTLY ARTICULATED BUT NONETHELESS REAL: MITTERRAND'S SENIOR STAFF FEELS THAT ANY OFFICIAL FRENCH PS AID TO THE PORTUGUESE SOCIALISTS COULD FORCE THE HAND OF THE PORTUGUESE PC AND RESULT IN AN UNTIMELY END FOR SOARES, WHOSE CONTINUED LEADERSHIP OF THE PORTUGUESE PS MITTERRAND REGARDS AS CRUCIAL. MITTERRAND HAS THUREPORTEDLYDIRECTED THAT PS NATIONAL SECRETARY FOR TRAINING LIONEL JOSPIN CEASE CONTACT WITH THE PORTUGUESE PS; FURTHER CONTACTS WILL BE CARRIED OUT BY VOLUNTEERS FROM THOSE PS FEDERATIONS WHICH HAVE A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF PORTUGUESE IMMIGRANTS (HAUTEGARONNE, BASSES-PYRENEES) AND WHO WILL PRESUMABLY ATTRACT LESS ATTENTION THAN THE HIGHER-LEVEL NATIONAL SECRETARIES.

4. CONCLUSIONS: IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE FRENCH PS
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WILL PLAY ANY EFFECTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORT OF ITS PORTUGUESE COMRADES. MITTERRAND AND HIS SENIOR STAFF WOULD OBVIOUSLY LIKE TO KEEP A CONTINUING FLOW OF ASSISTANCE GOING TO THE PORTUGUESE PS. HOWEVER, THE VERY REAL FEAR OF MAKING SOARES TOO CREDIBLE A THREAT TO THE PORTUGUESE PC, PLUS THE PS' NEED TO COMMIT LARGE SUMS IN FRANCE TO THE TRAINING OF THE SOME SIXTY THOUSAND NEW MEMBERS OF THE PS GAINED SINCE

THE LAST ELECTIONS, MAKES ANY ACTION UNLIKELY. THUS THE
PS RESPONSE WILL PROBABLY NOT GO BEYOND A FEW MITTERRAND
SPEECHES DEFENDING SOARES AND THE PORTUGUESE PS.
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